

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member just said, negotiations are going on, and I think that any comment at this critical stage in the negotiations would be inappropriate and inopportune.

[English]

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER INTERVENE

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Government's policy seems to be to watch the negotiations from an arm's length position and to wait until we have a strike on our hands before it will act.

This is a golden opportunity for the Prime Minister to prove to the Canadian public that there is a basis for his reputation as the so-called "great conciliator". I urge him to get involved personally in an attempt to avoid a strike by the letter carriers. Let's not wait until there is a strike before action is taken.

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. friend that the Prime Minister is an excellent conciliator. That is a matter about which there is no doubt.

At this point we are following the negotiation process. As provided by the Canada Labour Code, the Government, through the Department of Labour, has appointed a conciliator and a commissioner. A report has been tabled. The parties are now negotiating head to head, a very critical stage in the process, and we should not intervene at this point other than by way of encouraging the parties to come to an agreement.

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CHILD CARE

REQUEST LEGISLATION BE INTRODUCED BEFORE SUMMER RECESS

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister will know that parents are very concerned with the delay in taking action on child care. The children are getting older as the weeks go by. I should like to ask—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Mitchell: I do not think many parents consider this a laughing matter. Child care is urgently needed.

An Hon. Member: It is your statement that is the laughing matter.

An Hon. Member: Only Tories think it is a laughing matter.

Ms. Mitchell: Will the Government introduce the federal legislation outlining the national objectives for a national child care program, and will it do so before we recess for the summer?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, both at the First Ministers' Conference and at the Symposium on the Family sponsored by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, outlined the principles for a day care program supported by this Government, those principles being affordability, accessibility, flexibility, and quality.

Mr. Broadbent: And delay!

Mrs. McDougall: Those are principles about which we care a great deal. We have been working very hard on a child care program. While we considered the June 30 deadline an ambitious one, it was one that we had hoped to meet.

This Government's commitment to a child care program remains, and we will have a system in place that all Hon. Members will be able to support.

Ms. Mitchell: If those are the principles, why can't they be put into a Bill to be introduced in the House? In that way the federal objectives would be clear, thus facilitating the negotiations with the provinces.

PETITIONS SEEKING SHORT-TERM FUNDING

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Today, thousands of petitions were presented to the Government and to the Prime Minister personally, requesting that the federal Government provide immediate short-term funding to strengthen and expand non-profit child care while the new cost-sharing agreement is being negotiated.

What is the Prime Minister's response to those petitioners?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the petitions that were presented have been organized for the Prime Minister and for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. This Government is strongly committed to child care and is moving toward that goal.

Throwing money at the problem is not the answer. We must first have in place a policy and an agreement with the provinces. We must know what it is we are paying for. That is what Canadians want.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR RESPONSE BEFORE JUNE 30

Mrs. Lucie Pépin (Outremont): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister.

Several newspapers state today that the Government will not table its response on daycare before next Fall. We have been listening to the answers of the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, and since the Prime Minister himself has made a commitment to make this a priority item, I would like the Prime Minister to tell me whether or not the answer will be tabled by June 30. It is a very important question and also a very simple one to answer. Are we or are we not going to have an answer on the matter of daycare before June 30?